

FROM THE EDITOR

Within the past two decades tremendous strides have been made toward learning how to help people with disabilities enter the work force and the community with greater independence. Indeed, several of the previous issues of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* profiled advances in assistive technology for people with physical disabilities (March 1991) as well as successes of people with psychiatric impairments working in competitive employment (October 1991). In fact, one could argue that for people with disabilities elements are in place for greater employment opportunities, better quality of life, and full inclusion into society, especially with recent legislative advances such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. However, there is a perpetual yawning gap between what is known and what actually happens in local communities all over the United States.

Why is there such a discrepancy between the level of knowledge and the actual practices used in helping people with disabilities? It is probably safe to say that personnel working in the disability field have not been sufficiently trained in the technology practices nor enlightened with more progressive attitudes that would most benefit people with disabilities. This issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* focuses specifically on developing training capacity and expanding personnel preparation capabilities in the disability and rehabilitation fields. I feel fortunate to have been able to recruit two of the leading professionals in the field of special education and rehabilitation to help pull this issue together. Doctors Susan Brody Hasazi and Martha Lentz Walker have tremendous levels of experience in working in the disability field and, in particular, the special education and rehabilitation fields. The articles and authors they have recruited for contributions in this issue reflect their tremendous depth and breadth of maturity and experiences.

Training and technical assistance are of the highest priority in rehabilitation today. Informa-

tion developed by researchers and those involved in model demonstration programs is of limited value if we cannot train personnel on how to use this new information. Consumers and their families must be able to access the benefits of disability research and development that has transpired over the years. The articles in this issue go to great lengths to present appropriate philosophies and models for enhancing training and technical assistance efforts that are flexible and yet are focused on systems change. Approximately half the articles focus on integrated and/or supported employment efforts in particular, but all of them argue for a comprehensive approach to training and technical assistance.

Clearly, the focus needs to be on building expanded levels of capacity and providing quality rehabilitation services. Businesses and companies in the private sector would be unable to be effective and profitable if they did not have a well-trained, high-quality staff. In our field we cannot possibly expect to provide the services that are needed for people with disabilities unless there is a much greater quality of training services available to new professionals coming into the field and an upgrading of the knowledge of those who have been in the field for over 20 years.

Doctors Hasazi and Walker have done an excellent job in providing leadership for this issue. The articles presented here will help those formulating personnel preparation programs and technical assistance efforts do better jobs in their day-to-day work activities.

It should be noted that one of the excellent articles originally submitted for this issue was on minorities and personnel preparation by Dr. Sylvia Walker of Howard University. This article will not be published in this issue due to space limitations but will appear in the next issue of the *Journal on ethnic and cultural issues*.

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